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Galleries/Rome

An ironic inversion of meanings

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ROME — As the frontiers of what is called art continue to tend towards expansion, the general critical interest moves simultaneously towards a more precise and limited scope. In other words, Orwell's literary prophecy as to Nineteen-Eighty Four being the year of the control of the informational flux, in the case of art criticism, is coming to be. At 'Lascala' (Piazza San Giovanni, 10) the cultural association bearing the same name is proposing a showing entitled "Logomotives 1963-1983." This exhibition, ironically subtitled "masterpieces of visual poetry" is a lucid attempt to break out of the narrow confines imposed by a fixed critical viewpoint.

The group of scholars who comprise the association (most are connected to the departments of history of art and psychology at the University of Rome) have a short but intense history of activity in the organization of showings, conferences and debates. This show has been waylaid briefly in Rome on its way to the Pompidou Center in Paris. The works on view recount the experiences of a group of poet-artists who, in the Sixties with the formation of 'Gruppo 70', began to elaborate the ideas

and works which oscillate in the area of what we now call concrete poetry and visual poetry.

Openly professing their relative emargination with respect to the current art actualities, Arias-Misson, Blaine, Bory, Miccini, Sanrenco and Verdi choose anyway to place their works on exhibit: more as a homage to their deceased friend and collaborator De Vree (historically among the first to work along these lines) than as an attempt to re-gain a competitive role. Upon entering the ex-convent where the works are on view, one remains initially disconcerted. The pieces are enigmatic and even somewhat inaccessible: in times when the trend is to return to painting — these objects evidence a solid singularity.

There are little box theaters composed of photographs folded and mounted in 3-D where some of the images in the photo are cut out and dialogues are written in behind the jutting figurines; gold typewriters adorned with golden painted toy soldiers and menacing model tanks puzzle us; collages explode with juxtaposed images and words, with photos and overlaid texts; strange enlarged palettes become the ground for a direct opposition between form and its supposed content. Each piece evolves out-

ward from an internal contradiction and unfolds into an increasingly complex linguistic ambiguity.

One of the poets (E. Miccini) might be of some help for us in ferreting out the underlying significance of these works, "visual poetry is obstinately concerned with the problems of the theory of communication and information. With the help of cancellations, juxtapositions and interruptions of the channels of communication, it wants to excite awareness, operate a structural (and therefore critical) reconsideration, and provoke a deviation of sense, an ironic inversion of meanings..."

The Gallery A.A.M. (Moern Art and Architecture, Via del Vantaggio, 12) has decided to begin 1984 with a re-visitation. The showing is entitled 'Rites of passage' and it provides us with an opportunity to view the self-portraits (created especially for the occasion) of the artists and architects who have been connected with this Gallery, since its opening in 1978.

In these six years of activity A.A.M., under the guidance of F. Moschini, has proposed an interesting and vital survey of art and architecture face-to-face. The so-called 'Duets', where in a

visual artist and an architect were asked to share the gallery floor, invited the visitors to look at what work was being currently elaborated and to go beyond a simple reductive vision of the heterogeneous whole. The interface aimed neither at creating a hierarchy of 'success' nor at establishing an improbable common denominator.

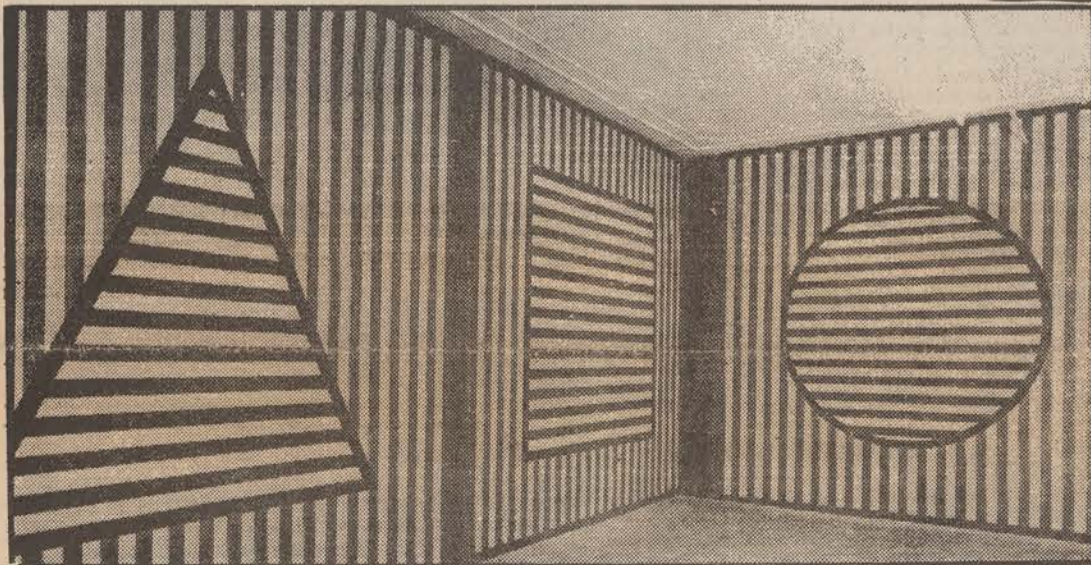
The number of presences in the gallery in these years was such that this collective exhibit has practically filled every square inch of the wall surface. The effect for the visitor is a somewhat claustrophobic atmosphere. On one hand, this must be seen as a sign of the organizers' desire to comprehend the entire vast catalogue of significant operators; however, it is also symptomatic of the actual frenetic explosion of theoretical architectural proposals in a country saturated with architects and lacking in concrete possibilities to realize projects.

The works are as varied as the authors: they range from the architectural drawings of D. Passi, C. Dardi, F. Purini to the more pictorial works of A. Rossi, P. Echaurren, P. Cotani, S. Mirri to the 3-D reliefs of L. Serafini and P. Klerr. The two directions for viewing the whole go from a careful (and rather concentrated) piece by piece scrutiny to an overall survey which might in the end even determine a self-portrait of the gallery itself.

Rites of passage imply a change in status in a system and in role as well. These ideal self-portraits crystallize a certain image in a given moment; both in positive and negative, the exhibit is the passageway to the new reality: it will be interesting indeed to see what will establish itself as the "present" upon a site so rich in 'past presences and proposals.

At the Gallery Ugo Ferranti (Via Tor Millina, 26) it is still possible to view the 'New Works' of Cy Twombly and Sol Lewitt that were placed up (or painted on) just before Christmas. Both of these internationally known artists are regular visitors at Ferranti's roman gallery and this might explain the oddly familiar and colorfully animated atmosphere which is certainly unusual for the gallery's customarily stark white-washed walls.

Sol Lewitt and Cy Twombly have little need of an introduc-



A Sol LeWitt construction.

Travel/Britain